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NSC STAFF FOR WATERS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [EG](#)
SUBJECT: ARREST OF CHRISTIAN ACTIVISTS

Sensitive but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

1.(U) On November 10, three members of the Toronto-based Middle East Christians Association (MECA) were arrested, two in Cairo and one in Alexandria. The three (Wagi Yacoub, Victor George, and Manduh Issa) are being held in the Cairo Prison for Provisional Detention, pending investigation of charges that they 1) insulted Islam; 2) published inaccurate quotations from the Koran; and 3) spread rumors that could fuel sectarianism.

12. (SBU) On November 13, we met with Ramzi El Naggar, the lawyer for the three MECA members. He believes that two of the three were arrested because they identified themselves by name in religious discussions on the social networking website "Paltalk." The third detainee previously tried to register MECA under Egypt's corporation law. The three have not been formally charged and El Naggar does not expect them to be. Instead, he believes that they will be held for three months, the maximum permitted under Egyptian law and then released without charges. (Note: El Naggar explained that Egypt's criminal code permits suspects to be held for 15 days without charges, but that a judge can extend the initial 15 day period, for 5 subsequent 15 day periods. End note). El Naggar also represented two other MECA members who were arrested in August, held without charges for three months and released on November 4.

3, (SBU) During the November 13 meeting, El Naggar expressed concern about the conditions in the jail where the three are being held, specifically that they were sharing a cell with common criminals, rather than political prisoners. During a subsequent telephone conversation on November 14, El Naggar advised that the three are now being held together and are being treated "well".
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